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## Foxfire, newspaper

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# msu/diversion

## MSU Blackfriars showcase "Foxfire"

By LEWIS ROBISON  
Feature Editor

Showcasing an excellent cast, the MSU department of communication and the Blackfriars Drama Society presented "Foxfire," a play with songs by Susan Cooper and Hume Cronyn.

Foxfire glows in the dark in the forests of southern Appalachia; it is a lichen which lives on dead fallen trees. It is also the name for a magazine in which for more than a decade, the young people of Appalachia have recorded the beliefs and personalities of their grandparents generation; the last of the indomitable pioneers who carved out of the unwelcoming mountain soil not only a living, but a tough, joyous way of life which has almost vanished now.

"Foxfire" is also a witty and charismatic play that relies on several plot lines. Annie Nations, an indomitable Appalachian widow of 79, lives on her mountain farm, Stoney Lonesome, with the acerbic spirit of her dead husband, Hector. Her tranquility is threatened by a brash real estate developer who wants to turn her land into a vacation resort for Floridians. She is also concerned with her son Dillard, a country singer

who has come home with problems of his own. Annie's battle to decide her future takes her back in time through a series of touching and magical flashbacks to her life with Hector.

Annie Nations, played by Myna Dickerson, is the last member of her family to remain on the farm. Nations seems incapable of leaving because of the sentimental attachment that she still holds for the home. She talks quite frequently with her husband, Hector, who has been dead and buried for five years.

Dickerson portrays Nations as a woman of warmth, with mountain sensibility thrown in for good measure. Dickerson's performance is both charming and believable. It is obvious that Dickerson took time in developing the mannerisms and speech of an aging Appalachian matron.

Stephen Cunetto also does a wonderful job in his portrayal of Hector Nations. Cunetto's use of facial and vocal expressions convey to the audience that Nations is a hard man, but a man who genuinely cares for his wife and family. At one point in the play, Hector kisses Annie gently on the lips after proposing to her for the time first on bended knee. In this critical scene, both Dickerson and Cunetto convince the audience of their character's

sincere love for each other.

John Brocato's performance as Annie's and Hector's son, Dillard, is what really makes this play work. It is so refreshing to see an actor who really concentrates on staying in character and still gives a believable delivery.

Dillard has become a country music artist who still sings the music that infuriated his father. Stranded with two small children and a runaway wife, Dillard has come home to woo his mother away from the spirit of his deceased father.

In one particular sequence, Dillard uses the audience as his crowd at a fairground. With the help of a three piece band, Brocato, as Dillard, delivers a first rate vocal performance. The music and the songs in this play are important in developing the mood and atmosphere of the play. Through the use of flashbacks, the audience is able to understand the strained relationship that Dillard had with his father. Brocato is able to convey the hurt, anger and even

the love that Dillard felt for his father. Brocato has the talent to convince the audience that generation gaps happen in every part of the country—even in Appalachia.

The play concludes with Annie deciding to leave the old home place and finally laying her husband's spirit to rest. Dillard, by returning to the old home place is also able to come to grips with the memory of his father.

Other cast members include Paul Ruff as Prince Carpenter, Lesha Campbell as Holly Burrell and Jeff Thomas as the doctor. "Foxfire" was directed by Dominic Cunetto, with scenery by Wayne Durst and costumes by Betty Jo Durst.

Overall, this was an excellent play. The stage looked realistically rustic, and the play generally moved along at a rapid pace. The lead actors were superb. The audience? The audience was more than pleased with the hard work and overall effort.



Steve Cunetto (left) and Myna Dickerson(right) star in a scene from "Foxfire"